

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 17362 221328Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 17362

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TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJ: US ATTITUDE TOWARD PSI LEADER CRAXI

1. IN AN INTERVIEW WHICH APPEARED IN THE OCTOBER 29 ISSUE OF THE WEEKLY MAGAZINE L'EUROPEO, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC DEPUTY MASSIMO DE CAROLIS REVIEWED HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH US OFFICIALS (ONLY HARTMAN MENTIONED BY NAME) AND ACADEMIC FIGURES DURING HIS RECENT TRIP TO THE US. THE ACCOUNT IS A LENGTHY AND CANDID ONE WHICH APPEARED UNDER THE UNFORTUNATE TITLE, "THE AMERICANS DON'T LIKE THE DC." WHILE THE TEXT OF THE INTERVIEW DOESN'T FULLY SUPPORT THE TITLE, DE CAROLIS DID HIGHLIGHT WHAT HE PERCEIVED AS WIDE-SPREAD SUPPORT IN THE US FOR THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (PSI), AND ESPECIALLY FOR PSI SECRETARY BETTINO CRAXI. ASKED WHO THE AMERICANS (IN THIS CONTEXT, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE) ARE COUNTING ON, ON. DE CAROLIS IS QUOTED AS REPLYING, "OAT WAS ANOTHER SURPRISE OF MY AMERICAN TRIP. THEY ARE COUNTING A LOT ON THE SOCIALIST PARTY. THEY ARE EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN THE ELECTION OF BETTINO CRAXI AS SECRETARY. THEY HOPE THAT THIS MEANS A CHANGE IN SOCIALIST POLICY. AND EVEN THOSE WHO HOLD CONSERVATIVE POSITIONS SEE THE SOCIALISTS AS THE ONLY REALISTIC POSSIBILITY FOR BREAKING THE CIRCLE. IF IT DEPENDED ON THE AMERICANS, THEY WOULD ALL TURN US BACK TO THE
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PAGE 02 ROME 17362 221328Z

CENTER-LEFT. ALL OF THEM. QUESTION: AS A PROPOSAL THIS DOESN'T SEEM VERY REALISTIC? ANSWER;

(DE CAROLIS) "NO, IT'S NOT VERY REALISTIC. IN FACT, ON THIS ISSUE WE HAD A NUMBER OF SAD CONVERSATIONS BECAUSE EVEN THEY UNDERSTAND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF THE SOCIALISTS. NEVERTHELESS, THE AMERICANS HAVE A STRONG PREFERENCE FOR SECRERY CRAXI." (THESE COMMENTS ARE BORDERED BY A PHOTO OF CRAXI TITLED "THE KEY MAN". "BETTINO CRAXI IS THE ITALIAN POLITICIAN ON WHICH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE IS COUNTING.").

2. THE PRESENT IS AN ESPECIALLY DELICATE TIME FOR CRAXI. HE DOES NOT COMMAND A CLEAR MAJORITY WITHIN THE PARTY. THE PSI CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS DUE TO CONVENE NEXT WEEK IN ORDER TO REVIEW THE FIRST MONTHS OF HIS STEWARDSHIP. EX-SECRETARY FRANCESCO DE MARTINO, THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION TO CRAXI, YESTERDAY RENEWED HIS CRITICISMS, ACCUSING CRAXI OF INCONSISTENCY AND OF HARBORING DREAMS OF COLLABORATION WITH THE PSDI. WE HAVE ALL BEEN IMPRESSED WITH CRAXI'S ANTI-COMMUNISM AND WITH THE PROGRESS WHICH HE HAS MADE IN REVIVING HIS PARTY AFTER A SERIOUS ELCTION DEFEAT. WHILE I CERTAINLY BELIEVE THAT CRAXI'S EFFORTS DESERVE OUR SYMPATHETIC SUPPORT, THE DELICACY AND TENUOUSNESS OF HIS SITUATION WILL REQUIRE GREAT CARE TO AVOID TOO-CLOSE PUBLIC ASSOCIATION OR TOO OBVIOUS SIGNS OF US ENDORSEMENT. WE REGRET THAT DE CAROLIS DECIDED TO GO PUBLIC IN SUCH EXPLICIT TERMS IN IDENTIFYING U.S. OFFICIAL POLICY IN SUPPORT OF CRAXI. OBVIOUSLY, WE ALL MUST BE VERY CAREFUL IN OUR CONTACTS NOT TO APPEAR TO WRAP OUR FLAG AROUND CRAXI OR WE WILL BE BURYING HIM IN IT.

3. MOST OF THE INTERVIEW WITH DE CAROLIS RELATES TO THE DC AND IS POSITIVE IN TONE. DE CAROLIS' COMMITMENT TO RENEWAL OF HIS PARTY IS CLEARLY APPARENT. CERTAIN CRITICISMS OF THE DC ATTRIBUTED TO THE DEPARTMENT MAY CAUSE SOME QUESTIONS HERE. DE CAROLIS ALSO QUOTES A DEPARTMENT SOURCE AS SAYING, "THE INTERNAL DOCUMENTS OF THE PCI ARE PERFECTLY KNOWN TO THE ITALIAN DESK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE." TEXT OF THE ARTICLE BEING AIRMAILED EUR/WE.

4. SEPTEL OF EMBOFFS CONVERSATION WITH DE CAROLIS FOLLOWS.
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PAGE 03 ROME 17362 221328Z

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